

4201 Peachtree Place, Alexandria, VA 22304 June 22, 1991

Harold Weisberg
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Dear Harold,

Travelled to my 50th Class Reunion at the Univ Massachusetts in Amherst. Spent several fine days there among 110 old friends. It was my first vacation trip in years; so we thought we'd stretch our legs a bit more and go on up into Maine. Without prior plans we ended up in Boothbay Harbor and stayed right on the wharf. It was great, and the lobster is incomparable. Then back via NH, VT, NY and PA. I was tired when I got back; but it was worth it.

Then, for the past three days I have been attending the annual conference of the Society of Historians for American Foreign Relations at GW Univ. I have been with this organization since its earliest years and I enjoy the meetings. I don't travel to them; but when they are this area I go.

Got home today and found a letter in the mail from Dave Wrone. He is a fine guy and one of the true professionals in this field. I had not had the pleasure of hearing from him for a while but he mentioned that he had been with you. I'm sorry I missed him. I've been up at Stevens point with him...but too long ago.

I have your letter of 5/30. My operation has slowed me down and I have trouble doing the things each day that I want to do. But things seem to improve each day.

That headline in the Stars and Stripes was of course the military pick up on the story. Around the world everyone knew that NSAM 263 was JFK's premiere plank of his 1964 campaign for re-election. What could have been better.

I have been surprised for years that more people did not pick up on how important NSAM 263 was in the assassination context. I am convinced it was why he was killed. In that day, under those conditions, it was an extremely important directive. He would have been re-elected on that platform.

JFK's "Trade Mart" speech of Nov 22nd appears on page 830 of Vol II of the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers. It was a most important...proposed...speech.

Your story of your visits to the Foster Dulles home is most valuable. He was a real character. During this SHAFR Convention and young man tried to give a paper on Dulles. There is no way he could catch the full flavor of that man without knowing him.

You talk about his gout. Did you know that brother Allen had a club foot? He got over it rather well and played a fair game of tennis. He had a tennis court in the backyard of his home in Georgetown.

You ought to have a special advertising circular made for the Embassy Row set about your birds and Dulles. If you are ever having any delivered in the Alexandria area you'll have to let me

know. Birds are not what they used to be.

I used to have chickens that never knew a cage, never knew prepared foods and could fly. They were huge and were delightful. You can't get that sort of thing today. Today I went to the Alexandria Farmers Market just to get three dozen farm fresh jumbo eggs. I can't get them anywhere else and I can not get good bird meat anywhere. Dulles would know how to find "Good Birds." My visits to his home, or his brother's, were limited to business; so I do not have the individual memories you have.

In his library Foster had a white phone with no dial. All he did was pick it up, say a few words, and the world was at his hand. I saw him call Russians in Russia many times. Good phone. Great man.

One thing I could never figure out about him is that in 1950 he made a speech in the Far East when he had no job with the government and in that speech he said that Chiang Kai-Shek and Syngman Rhee were great Christians and "the equal of the Founders of the Church." I have trouble believing that he said that or what he meant by it. Some guy.

The steps taken by JFK, and others, to assure the live removal of the Diems are fairly well described in the Pentagon Papers; but they did not know the full details. He was to be flown by a chartered Air France plane to Europe.

As for the missiles in Cuba. We never saw a single "MISSILE" in Cuba. We saw stacks of things covered by tarp that were the size of missiles; but we never saw them without the tarp. I had a good friend who was the pilot of a Navy RCN aircraft that used to shoot across that "missile" site at very low altitude with a special camera that had its shutter open all the time and the speed of the film movement was matched to the speed of the plane. This gave extremely clear pictures.

None of their pictures, and none of them personally ever saw a real missile. All they saw was the tarp.

With reference to that "Missile Crisis" most people seem to have overlooked the fact that we had naval forces in Guantanamo and that we had ships at sea and that we had U-2's overhead and that we had tens of thousands of first line troops in Florida. Had JFK told Gen Adams to attack, Cuba would have been done in an hour or two. If they had made a move to remove the tarps, we would have attacked anyhow. Khrushchev was a bluff: we had them in our sights.

I happened to be the person sent by the JCS to speak with Gen Adams and the Admiral in Norfolk that evening. I was totally up to date, and I know that they were ready and able. JFK knew he did not have to attack.

It was JFK's strength not to use force when force was not needed. He did not in Cuba and he had declared that he would not in Vietnam. It is this fact that caused the big boys to decide that he had to go. They want force...witness this Gulf scenario.

In the Tonkin Gulf, the situation was a response to provocation.

You'll recall that in the summer of 1963 JFK had asked the JCS for plans for covert attacks on the North. When they were done my boss took them to Adm Felt in Honolulu. They were never used by JFK; but he held them ready. Then when LBJ became President these same plans, known as OP-34 were taken out and with NSAM 288 of Mar 1964 they were used. This meant that US forces supporting Vietnamese forces were running sneak attacks on the Vietminh. After one of these attacks the North Vietnamese responded.

LBJ said the North provoked the attack, over-looking the first strike by our people and the Tonkin Incident followed. It was all a covert powerplay that had been planned for a long time. It may well be that the US Navy vessels were never actually hit.

You're correct about Tad Szulc. He always played the party line.

Now I am going back to your 5/23 letter. In this you say something about the "Second Strike" of the Bay of Pigs operation. Let's review the bidding.

First of all the "Letter to the President" June 13, 1961, by Gen Maxwell Taylor and the Special Study Group that reviewed the Bay of Pigs on orders from JFK (Burke, Dulles, and Bobby) is the key to the facts of the case. It is available at the JFK Library. It is also available, verbatim, in an excellent book, "ZAPATA".

JFK did not approve the landing of the Brigade on the beaches of Cuba until mid-afternoon of Sunday the day before the landing. At the same time he ordered that there be a B-26 bombing strike against the last three combat-ready aircraft Castro had. He was looking at U-2 photographs that showed where they were. The four B-26's were at Puerto Cabazas, Nicaragua. They would be released to strike these planes at dawn, Monday at the same time the troops were landing far to the north. This was all approved on that Sunday PM and all the commanders knew their orders. My friend was at Puerto Cabezas and he called me on the phone at my home that night. That second strike on three small aircraft on the ground would be a cinch. His men were ready.

That night, according to Gen Taylor, McGeorge Bundy called Gen Cabell, Dulles #2 man (Dulles was out of the country) and told him that the flight would not be flown. If Cabell disagreed he was to speak to Rusk. In the uncertainty Cabell let the hour go by when the planes had to leave to be there by dawn. This caused the whole collapse of the plan because those three jets sank ships and shot down the slower B-26's. The invasion failed.

That was the reason...pure and simple.

The idea of a second wave of aircraft is ridiculous. The damage was done at dawn when those jets took off and sank the Brigade's supply ships. It would have done no good just to fly over there. The damage had already been done and it was irrevocable.

The people who talk about a second Navy strike aren't using their heads. What could it have done with the ships already destroyed and 16 B-26s gone? That's foolish and JFK a Navy veteran knew it. The mistake was by Bundy. In the Group meetings, as you can read, neither Taylor nor Burke...both combat veterans said a word about the "Second Strike" foolishness. It was all over by the time the

jets took off.

If you want to know why, with a superior military force, we did not defeat Ho you ought to read my old boss' wonderful book "First to Fight" by General Victor H. Krulak. He has one chapter in that book which more than any I have ever seen anywhere tells the sad story of Vietnam. In essence Averill Harriman and LBJ turned down a plan to attack with the comment "Do you want to get us in a nuclear war?" Krulak packed up his War Plan and knew the game was lost. You must read that magnificent and sensible book (one chapter only) to see how important that was.

The first man I reported to in 1941 was Capt Creighton W. Abrams. He was from my home town. I knew him from 1941 until I retired in 1964. Under Patton in Europe he was the most brilliant combat commander we had. He was Commander of Patton's Lead...Third Army...Brigade. When he went to Vietnam he wanted to take Hanoi. LBJ would not let him. "Do you want to provoke nuclear war?" That is what beat us in Vietnam.

We could have whipped Ho Chi Minh with conventional weapons; but our leaders believed that Russia would have retaliated with the nuclear weapon and ignited a global disaster.

You ask a great question...can we conquer an army but not the people? Up to the time of Napoleon that was possible. After that armies became people's armies. Just think of the slaughter in the Ukraine...of civilians...in 1943-1944. Today the army and the people are too much the same and the weapons are too massive. Just look at the gulf war and how the people who were non-combatant died by the thousands. And that is without the nuclear weapon that is always ready.

What we seem to have forgotten is that "WAR" is, and must be, an all-out, unfettered, "last act" of a nation. The minute someone attempts to limit it or put it under control it is no longer war. Thousands can be killed, as in Korea and Vietnam; but that is not "WAR." Our leadership has not, and can not, figure out how to wage "WAR" under the threat of the super Hydrogen bomb that exists today.

Man will fight a duel. He has a 50% chance of survival...perhaps better than that if he is expert and his opponent is not. But a nuclear war does not even rate the chances of a 50% solution. Not only will man die; but so will Earth.

This is where mankind is today. We had better begin to THINK.

Thanks for your good letters.

Ciao,



L. Fletcher Prouty